

of Israel. I want to thank you for your warm hospitality today. May God bless America. May God bless Israel. Thank you for coming. Thank you all for your time. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 a.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Amy Friedkin, president, board of directors, Bernice Manocherian, president-elect, and Howard Kohr, executive director, American Israel

Public Affairs Committee; Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Ehud Olmert, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Yosef “Tommy” Lapid, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarkawi; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Iraqi Governing Council President Izz al-Din al-Salim, who was killed in a suicide car bomb attack on May 17 in Baghdad.

Statement on Establishing the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force *May 18, 2004*

The Great Lakes are a national treasure that represents 20 percent of the world’s fresh water. The Great Lakes region is an economic engine and recreational haven, and we are making great progress in protecting and restoring this vital natural resource.

To build on that progress, today I am establishing the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, chaired by EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt. The Task Force will address environmental and natural resource issues of national concern and better coordinate the region’s sustainable development and

restoration. It will harness the collective efforts of the Federal Government, Governors, mayors, Members of Congress, tribes, and citizen stewards to ensure that the greatness of the lakes endures for generations. The Task Force will also consult with the Government of Canada on the most effective way forward on addressing past and current environmental impacts to the Great Lakes ecology.

NOTE: The Executive order on establishment of the Task Force is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters *May 19, 2004*

The President. Thank you for coming. I’ve just met with my Cabinet to discuss a variety of issues. We spent a lot of time talking about the situation in Iraq. I detailed our plan and our strategy to transfer full sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June the 30th. I reminded them that a lot of progress has been made already toward that transfer. Eleven ministries are now run by

Iraqi citizens—I might add, capably run by Iraqi citizens.

I discussed with the Cabinet the plans of Mr. Brahimi, the U.N. representative who is consulting with Iraqi leadership and Iraqi citizenry, as well as our own Government officials there, about the interim government and who will occupy the positions of responsibility in that government. I